

Ready, Rafa

Hatters on a roll as they get set for FA Cup clash

HATTERS 1 YEOVIL 0

Mark Wood reports from Kenilworth Road

A STRING of battling performances that have earned Kevin Blackwell's men an unbeaten three game run means Luton Town are as ready as they're going to be for Sunday's visit of Premier League legends Liverpool.

Despite the departure of key loan players and the fear that the televised FA Cup tie could act as a shop window for remaining Hatters stars coveted by other clubs, yesterday's victory has put Kevin Blackwell's resurgent team in good heart and ready for Rafa Benitez and his star-studded Scousers.

Dominant Hatters turned in one of their best performances of the season even though they had to settle for a 1-0 victory, Calvin Andrew's 48th minute diving header all they had to show for a performance which featured both panache and passion.

Blackwell named an unchanged starting line-up from the one that bagged a first away victory of the season at Port Vale on Saturday.

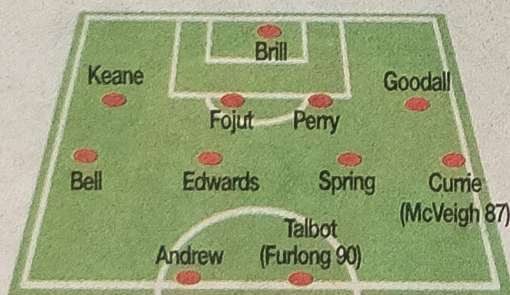
Sticking with his 4-4-2 formation the Hatters started brightly enough with Drew Talbot and Andrew linking well.

And it was Andrew who had the first effort of the game, warming Steven Mitchell's gloves from 25 yards in just the second minute.

Hatters created all the early chances, with David Edwards twice having shots blocked, while Andrew was only able to glance Darren Currie's dangerous sixth minute cross wide.

Luton almost took the lead on 12 minutes when Currie whipped in a corner to find Matthew Spring at the

LUTONTOWN 07/08



Unused subs: Hutchison, Jackson, Robinson

YEOVIL



Unused subs: Alcock, Bircham

Referee: Dean Whitestone (Northants) Att: 6,811 (Yeovil 392)

STAR HATTER: Drew Talbot
- incredible work rate.

far post, only for his effort to be cleared off the line by Gary Dempsey.

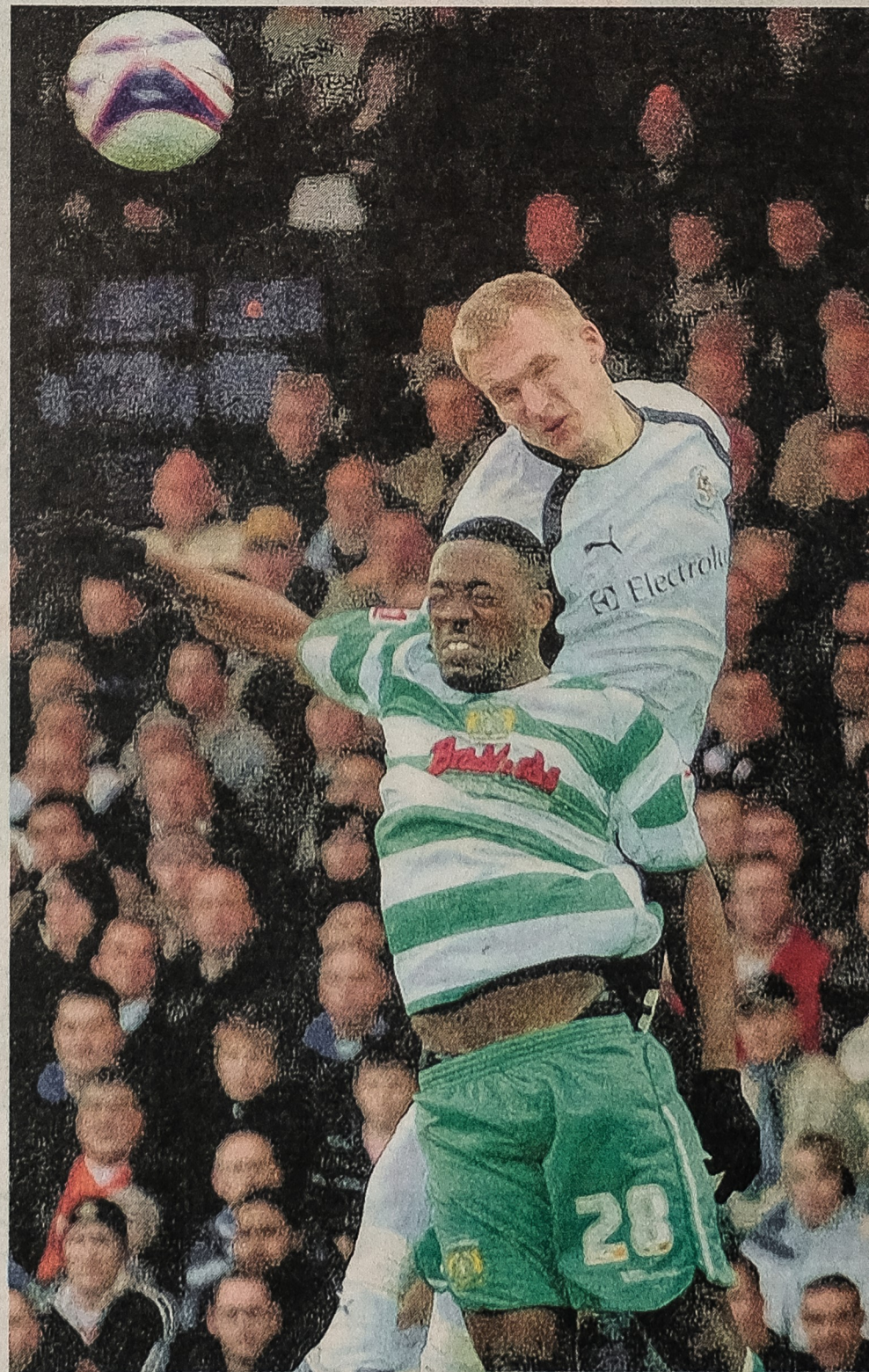
But when the Glovers did get forward they looked dangerous and almost took advantage of a poor Dean Brill clearance kick seconds later.

The ball was eventually played through to veteran hitman Marcus Stewart, but he rolled a tame shot from the edge of the area straight at the grateful Luton keeper.

Midway through the half the visitors began to come into the game a little more and on 24 minutes James Walker could have been away if only he had timed his run for Zoltan Stieber's through ball more accurately. Paul Warne also had a decent effort deflected behind for a corner seconds later.

On 28 minutes Luton were desperately unlucky not to take the lead when Bell's driven pass released Talbot into the box.

The striker stepped inside his man before thumping a shot on to the bar and out.



FAREWELL FOJUT: Hatters fans gave the departing defender a standing ovation at the end of yesterday's win.

Hatters were playing some of their most entertaining football in weeks and Andrew almost broke the deadlock five minutes before the break.

He did well to control Alan Goodall's cross on the edge of the

box, but sadly his snap shot was straight at Mildenhall.

Yeovil had their keeper to thank again moments later when Talbot's run down the right and cross caused chaos in the visitors' box.

Mildenhall pushed away Edwards' near post effort and recovered in time to deny Currie from the follow-up.

Luton started off the second half as they had ended the first and it took them just three minutes to take the lead.

Bell put in a tremendous first-time cross from the byline and Andrew flung himself into the danger area to head home from close range.

Hatters were in complete control by now and more good work from Talbot almost brought a second goal on 50 minutes.

His fine run and cross picked out Currie at the far post, but Mildenhall flung out a leg to again deny the skilful midfielder.

The introduction of Lloyd Owusu seemed to give the Glovers more of a punch up front and Stewart's clever pass found the substitute in the area on 63 minutes, but Luton's defence recovered and his heavily-deflected shot was easily gathered by Brill.

With Yeovil pressing for an equaliser the game was more evenly poised, but Talbot managed to slide a shot just wide on 70 minutes.

The lively striker then lost his marker two minutes later and although Mildenhall managed to take the sting out of his effort the ball was still heading for the back of the net before Matt Rose intervened and hammered it off the line.

Luton looked to have got number two with 10 minutes left when Edwards got his head to Bell's driven free kick, but Mildenhall somehow got down to his right to turn the effort on to a post and then grasp the rebound.

Andrew should have put the game beyond doubt when Currie's free-kick found him hardly a yard out at the far post, but somehow the young striker contrived to put his effort over the bar.

Andrew then tried to turn provider when his cross found Spring on the edge of the area, but his side-footed strike was straight at Mildenhall.

Spring was again denied by Mildenhall deep into stoppage time, but the Hatters had already done enough to record their first back-to-back league wins this season.

At the final whistle the Kenilworth Road faithful paid a fond farewell to Fojut, giving the on-loan Polish defender a standing ovation as he left field.